(c) The appointment of the selected candidates is held up for want of approval for the release of vacancies.

Purchase of shoes for armed forces

424. PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the reply to Starred Question 144 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 4th March, 1993 and state :

(a) whether Government have investigated the causes of not following earlier decision of Central Government for procurement and purchase of boots and shoes for armed forces from the TAFCO;

(b) whether the capacity of 60 to 70 per cent in the TAFCO for boots for armed forces is not being fully utilised for the past several years;

(c) if so, whether Government would now direct the forces to utilise the capacity of the company to the maximum; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) to (d) As per the decision of the Government, after booking the capacity of the Ordnance Equipment Factory, orders are placed on Public Sector Undertakings (P. S. Us) including TAFCO, for the balance quantities, on the basis of guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises regarding purchases from P. S. Us. Only if such PSUs are unable to accept the order for any reason, the procurement is made from other sources.

Delay in production of the aircraft

425. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that LCA originally scheduled to take off in 1990 is not likely to be test flown before 1966;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for delay in the production of the aircraft;

(c) whether it is also a fact that over five to seven years would be required after its production before making the aircraft available to the IAF to overcome the teething trouble; and

(d) if so, what is its overall impact on the IAF ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The reasons for delay are :

(i) not having undertaken a front-line indigenous aircraft development programme for more than 25 years, country lacked in infrastructure, technology and facilities. Development of a large number of technologies and facilities had to be taken up de-novo. Now the design capability has been built up.

(ii) non-availability of RB 199 engine, which was originally planned to be used in initial prototypes. Time taken in locating alternate engine and in getting clearance for GE 404 engine. We have also taken up our own aircraft engine (Kaveri) development.

(iii) non availability of critical foreign exchange. Conscious decision to change development strategy to enhance indigenous content, and accepting longer time-frame involved in indigenous routes.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. Once production starts there will be no delay in making available the aircraft to IAF. All the production problems will be overcome between the first flight of LCA in 1996 to Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) in the year 2002. These time schedules have been jointly evolved between ADA